

Carolina Chansons

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DU BOSE HEYWARD *and*
HERVEY ALLEN

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CAROLINA CHANSONS
LEGENDS OF THE LOW COUNTRY



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TORONTO

CAROLINA CHANSONS

LEGENDS OF THE LOW COUNTRY

BY

DuBOSE HEYWARD AND HERVEY ALLEN

NEW YORK
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THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1922

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PREFACE

IN a continent but recently settled, many parts of which have as yet little historical or cultural background, the material for this volume has been gathered from a section that was one of the first to be colonized. Here the Frenchman, Spaniard, and Englishman all passed, leaving each his legend; and a brilliant and more or less feudal civilization with its aristocracy and slaves has departed with the economic system upon which it rested.

From this medley of early colonial discovery and romance, from the memories of war and reconstruction, it has been as difficult to choose coherently as to maintain restraint in selection among the many grotesque negro legends and superstitions so rich in imagery and music. Coupled with this there has been another task; that of keeping these legends and stories in their natural matrix, the semi-tropical landscape of the *Low Country*, which somehow lends them all a pensively melancholy yet fitting background. Not to have so portrayed them, would have been to sacrifice their essentially local tang. To the reader unfamiliar with coastal Carolina, the unique aspects of its landscapes may seem exaggerated in

Preface

these pages; the observant visitor and the native will, it is hoped, recognize that neither the colors nor the shadows are too strong. These poems, however, are not local only, they are stories and pictures of a chapter of American history little known, but dramatic and colorful, and in the relation of an important part to the whole they may carry a decided interest to the country at large.

Local color has a fatal tendency to remain local; but it is also true that the universal often borders on the void. It has been said, perhaps wisely, that the immediate future of American Poetry lies rather in the intimate feeling of local poets who can interpret their own sections to the rest of the country as Robinson and Frost have done so nobly for New England, rather than in the effort to *yawp* universally. Hence there is no attempt here to say, "O New York, O Pennsylvania," but simply, "O Carolina."

The South, however, has been "interpreted" so often, either with condescending pity or nauseous sentimentality, that it is the aim of this book to speak simply and carefully amid a babel of unauthentic utterance. Nevertheless, the contents of this volume do not pretend to exact historical accuracy; this is poetry rather than history, although the legends and facts upon which it rests have been gathered with much painstaking research and careful verification. It should be kept in mind that these poems are

Preface

impressionistic attempts to present the fleeting feeling of the moment, landscape moods, and the ephemeral attitudes of the past. Legends are material to be moulded, and not facts to be recorded. Above all here is no pretence of propaganda.

As some of the material touched on is not accessible in standard reference, prose notes have been included giving the historical facts or background of legend upon which a poem has been based. These notes together with a bibliography will be found at the back of the volume.

If the only result of this book is to call attention to the literary and artistic values inherent in the South, and to the essentially unique and yet nationally interesting qualities of the Carolina *Low Country*, its landscapes and legends, the labor bestowed here will have secured its harvest.

DUBOSE HEYWARD - HERVEY ALLEN.

Charleston, S. C.
December, 1921.

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CAROLINA CHANSONS
LEGENDS OF THE LOW COUNTRY

SÉANCE AT SUNRISE

PLACE the new hands
In the old hands
Of the old generation,
And let us tilt tables
In the high room
Of our imagination.

Let the thick veil glow thin,
At sunrise—at sunrise—
Let the strange eyes peer in,
The red, the black, and the white faces
Of the still living dead
Of the three races.

Let a quaint voice begin:

Voice of an Indian

“Gone from the land,
We leave the music of our names,
As pleasant as the sound of waters;
Gone is the log-lodge and the skin tepee,
And moons ago the ghost-canoe brought home
The latest of our sons and daughters—
Yet still we linger in tobacco smoke

Carolina Chansons

And in the rustling fields of maize;
Faint are the tracks our moccasins have left,
But they are there, down all your ways."

Voice of a Slave

"We do not talk
Of hours in the rice
When days were long,
Nor of old masters
Who are with us here
Beyond all right or wrong.
Only white afternoons come back,
When in the fields
We reached the Mercy Seat
On wings of song."

Voice of a Planter

"Nothing moves there but the night wind,
Blowing the mosses like smoke;
All would be silent as moonlight
But for the owl in the oak—
Stairways that lead up to nothing—
Windows like terrible scars—
Snakes on a log in the cistern
Peering at stars . . ."

Spirit of Prophecy

"Dawn with its childish colors

Séance at Sunrise

Stipples the solemn vault of night;
Behind the horizon the sun shakes a bloody fist;
Mysteries stand naked by the lakes of mist;
Spirits take flight,
The medicine man,
The voodoo doctor—
Witches mount brooms.
The day looms.
Faster it comes,
Bringing young giants
Who hate solitude,
And march with drums—
Beat—beat—beat,
Down every ancient street,
The young giants! Minded like boys:
Action for action's sake they love
And noise for noise."

Voice of a Poet

"The fire of the sunset
Is remembered at midnight,
But forgotten at dawn.
While the old stars set,
Let us speak of their glory
Before they are gone."

H. A.

SILENCES *

YOU who have known my city for a day
And heard the music of her steepled bells,
Then laughed, and passed along your vagrant way,
Carrying only what the city tells
To those who listen solely with their ears;
You know St. Matthew's swinging harmonies,
And old St. Michael's tale of golden years
Far less like bells than chanted memories.

Yet there is something wanting in the song
Of lyric youth with voice unschooled by pain.
And there are breathing stillnesses that throng
Dim corners, and that only stir again
When bells are dumb. Not even bronze that beats
Our heart-throbs back can tell of old defeats.

But you who take the city for your own,
Come with me when the night flows deep and kind
Along these narrow ways of troubled stone,
And floods the wide savannas of the mind
With tides that cool the fever of the day:

* See the note on the chimes at back of book.

Silences

One with the dark, companioned by the stars,
We'll seek St. Philip's, nebulous and gray,
Holding its throbbing beacon to the bars,
A prisoned spirit vibrant in the stone
That knew its empire of forgotten things.
Then will the city know you for her own,
And feel you meet to share her sufferings;
While down a swirl of poignant memories,
Herself shall find you in her silences.

Once coaches waited row on shining row
Before this door; and where the thirsty street
Drank the deep shadow of the portico
The Sunday hush was stirred by happy feet,
Low greetings, and the rustle of brocade,
The organ throb, and warmth of sunny eyes
That flashed and smiled beneath a bonnet shade;
Life with the lure of all its swift disguise.

Then from the soaring lyric of the spire,
Like the composite voice of all the town,
The bells burst swiftly into singing fire
That wrapped the building, and which showered down
Bright cadences to flash along the ways
Loud with the splendid gladness of the days.

War took the city, and the laughter died
From lips that pain had kissed. One after one

Carolina Chansons

All lovely things went down the sanguine tide,
While death made moaning answer to the gun.
Then, as a golden voice dies in the throat
Of one who lives, but whose glad heart is dead,
The bells were taken; and a sterner note
Rang from their bronze where Lee and Jackson led.

The rhythmic seasons chill and burn and chill,
Cooling old angers, warming hearts again.
The ancient building quickens to the thrill
Of lilting feet; but only singing rain
Flutters old echoes in the portico;
Those who can still remember love it so.

D. H.

PRESENCES

DESPISE the garish presences that flaunt
The obvious possession of today,
To wear with me the spectacles that haunt
The optic sense with wraiths of yesterday—
These cobbled shores through which the traffic streams
Have been the stage-set of successive towns,
Where confined actors postured out their dreams,
And harlot Folly changed her thousand gowns.
This corner-shop was Bull's Head Tavern,
When names now dead on marble lived in clay;
Its rooms were like a sanded cavern,
Where candles made a sallow jest of day,
And drovers' boots came grinding like a quern,
While merchants drank their steaming cups of "tay."

Here pock-marked Black Beard covenanted Bonnet
To slit the Dons' throats at St. Augustine,
And bussed light ladies, unknown to this sonnet,
Whose names, no doubt, would rime with Magdalene.
And English parsons, who had lost their fames,
Sat tippling wine as spicy as their joke,
Larding bald texts with bets on cocking mains,
And whiffing pipes churchwardens used to smoke.
Here *macaronis*, hands a-droop with laces,

Carolina Chansons

Dealt knave to knave in *picquet* or *écarté*,
In coats no whit less scarlet than their faces,
While bullies hiccuped healths to King and Party,
And Yankee slavers, in from Barbadoes,
Drove flinty bargains with keen Huguenots.

Then Meeting Street first knew St. Michael's steeple,
When redcoats marched with royal drums a-banging,
Or merchants stopped gowned tutors to inquire
Why school let out to see a pirate hanging;
And gentlemen took supper in the street,
When candle-shine from tables guled the dark,
While others passing by would be discreet
And take the farther side without remark,
Pausing perhaps to snuff the balmy savor
Of turtle-soup mulled with the bay-leaves' flavor:
These walls beheld them, and these lingering trees
That still preëempt the middle of the gutter;
They are the backdrops for old comedies—
If leaves were tongues—what stories they might utter!

H. A.

THE PIRATES *

I STOOD once where these rows of deep piazzas
Frown on the harbor from their columned pride,
And saw the gallant youngest of the cities
Lift from the jealous many-fingered tide.
Flanked by the multi-colored sweeping marshes,
Among the little hummocks choked with thorn,
I saw the first, small, dauntless row of buildings
Give back the rose and orange of the dawn.
Above them swayed the shining green palmettoes
Vocal and plaintive at the winds' caress;
While, at the edge of sight, the fluent silver
Of sea and bay framed the wide loneliness.

Out of the East came gaunt razees of commerce
Troubling the dappled azure of the seas;
While sleeping marsh awoke, and vanished under
The thrusting open fingers of the quays.

Ever, and more, came ships, while others followed.
Feeling their way among unsounded bars,
Heaping their freights upon the groaning wharf-heads,
Filling their holds with turpentine and tars,

* See the note on the pirates.

Carolina Chansons

Until the little twisting streets all vanished
Into a blur of interwoven spars.

II

One with the rest, I saw the commerce dwindle,
High-bosomed, sturdy vessels take the main
And leave us, with the morning in their faces,
Never to come to any port again.
Slowly an ominous and pregnant silence
Grew deep upon the wharves where ships had lain.

Laughter rang hollow in those days of waiting,
And nameless fears came drifting down the night.
The tides swung in from sea, hung, and retreated,
Bearing their secrets back beyond our sight;
Till, like the sudden rending of a curtain,
The East reeled with the lightnings of a fight.

Never was a night so long with waiting.
Never was the dark more prone to stay.
And, in the whispering gloom, taut, listening faces
Hung in a pallid line along the bay.
Slowly at last the mists dissolved, revealing
A fearful silhouette against the day.

Blue on a saffron dawn, a frigate lifted
Out of the fog that veiled her fold on fold,

The Pirates

Taking the early sunlight on her cannon
In running spurts and rings of molten gold;
No flag of any nation at her masthead.
Small wonder that our pulses fluttered cold.

Never a shot she fired on the city,
But, when the night came blowing in from sea,
And our ruddy windows warmed the darkness,
Through the surrounding gloom we heard the free
Strong sweep and clank of rowing in the harbor,
And on the wharves raw jest and revelry.

She was the first, but many others followed;
Insolent, keen, and swift to come-about,
I have seen them go smashing down the harbor,
Loud with the boom of canvas and the shout
Of lusty voices at the crowded bulwarks,
Where tattooed hands were swinging long-boats out.

Up through the streets the roisterers would swagger,
Filling the narrow ways from wall to wall,
Scattering gold like ringing summer showers,
Ready with song and jest and cheery call
For those who passed; buying the little taverns
At any cost; opening wine for all.

There were rare evenings when we used to gather
Down in a coffee-house beside the square.

Carolina Chansons

Morgan knew well our little favored corner;
Black Beard the sinister was often there;
And we have watched the night blur into morning
While Bonnet, quiet-voiced and debonnaire,

Would throw the glamor of the seas about us
In archipelagoes of mad romance;
Pointing a story with a line from Shakespeare,
Quoting a Latin proverb; while his glance,
Flashing across the eager, listening circle,
Fettered—blinded—held us in a trance.

Their bags of Spanish gold bribed our juries,
Bought dignified officials of the Crown;
Money and wine were ours for the asking;
The Orient flamed out in shawl and gown,
Until a sudden and unholy splendor
Irradiated all the quiet town.

Those were the days when there was open gaming,
And roaring song in tongue of every race.
Evil, as colorful as poison weeds,
Bloomed in the market place.
And those who should have known, shared in the revels,
And passed their neighbors with averted face.

Until one day a frigate entered harbor,
And passed the city, with a Spanish prize,

The Pirates

Then insolently came-about, despoiled her,
And fired her before our very eyes,
While the vagrant breezes left the streaming vapor
Like red rust on the clean steel of the skies.

III

All in the sullied hours,
While the pirates stood away
Out of the murk and horror
In a sheer white burst of spray,

Leaving the wreck to settle
Under its winding sheet,
I felt the city shudder
And stir beneath my feet.

Thrilling against the morning,
As audible as song,
I heard the city waken
Out of her night of wrong.

That was a day to cherish
When Rhett and a gallant few
Summoned the best among us;
Called for a daring crew.

New and raw at the business,
To the smithy's roar and clang,

Carolina Chansons

We drove our aching muscles
And as we worked we sang,

Until one blowing morning
With summer on the sea,
The *Henry* to the windward,
The *Sea Nymph* down alee,

Flecking the wide Atlantic
With a flaring, lacy track,
We went, as glad as the winds are glad,
To buy our honor back.

IV

Over the wooded shore-line,
Where the hidden rivers stray
Down to the sea like timid girls,
I saw in the first faint gray

A burst of cloudy topsails
Go blowing swiftly by,
With the stars aswirl behind them
Like bright dust down the sky.

Gone were the days of waiting,
And the long, blind search was gone;
With a cheer we swung to meet them
On the forefoot of the dawn.

The Pirates

Out of the screening woodland
Into the open sound
The frigate crashed, then staggered
Careening, fast aground.

White water tugged behind us,
We felt the *Henry* reel
And spin as the hard impartial sand
Closed on her vibrant keel.

All through the high white morning,
While the lagging tide crawled out,
Fate held us bound and waiting,
While, turn and turn about,

We manned the fuming cannon
And bartered hell for hell,
While the scuppers sang with coursing life
Where the dead and dying fell.

Till, like the break of fever
When life thrills up through pain,
We felt the current stirring
Under the keel again.

Then it was hand to cutlass,
And pistols in the sash.
"All hands stand by for boarding,—
Now, close abeam and lash!"

Carolina Chansons

But the ensign that had mocked us
With its symbol of the dead
Fluttered and dropped to the bloody deck,
And a white square spoke instead.

Home from the kill we thundered
On the tail of the equinox,
To the thrum of straining canvas,
And the whine and groan of blocks.

Leaping clear of the shallows,
Chancing the creaming bars,
We heard the first faint cheering
As the late sun limned our spars.

Safe in the lee of the city
We moored in the afterglow,
The *Sea Nymph* and the *Henry*
With the buccaneers in tow.

Glad we had been in the going,
But God! it was good to come
Out of the sky-wide loneliness
To the walls and lights of home.

V

Under these shouldering rows of stone
That notch the quiet sky;

The Pirates

Under the asphalt's transient seal
The same old mud-flats lie;
And I have felt them surge and lift
At night as I passed by.

Yes, I have seen them sprawling nude
While an Autumn moon hung chill,
And the tide came shuddering in from sea,
Lift by lift, until
It held them under a silver mesh,
Responsive to its will.

Then slowly out from the crowding walls
I have seen the gibbets grow,
And stand against the empty sky
In a desolate, windblown row,
While their dancers swayed, and turned, and spun,
Tripping it heel and toe;

With a flash of gold where the peering moon
Saw an earring as it swung,
And a silver line that leapt and died
Where the salt-white sea-boots hung,
And the pitiful, nodding, silent heads,
With half of their songs unsung.

D. H.

THE SEWEES OF SEWEE BAY *

"And these squaws, waiting in vain the return of their husbands, sought out braves among the other tribes, and so men say the Sewees have become Wandos."

"ONE flask of rum for fifty muskrat skins!
A horn of powder for a bear's is not enough;
A whole winter's hunting for some blanket stuff—
Ugh!" said the Sewee Chief,
"The pale-face is a thief!"

Ever, from the north-north-east,
The great winged canoes
Swept landward from the shining water
Into Bull's Bay,
Where the poor Sewees trapped the otter,
Or took the giant oysters for their feast—
Ever the ships came from the north and east.

Surely, at morning, when they walked the beaches,
Over the smoky-silver, whispering reaches,
Where the ships came from, loomed a land,
Far-off, one mountain-top, away
Where the great camp-fire sun made day:

* See the note at the back of the book.

The Sewees of Sewee Bay

“There are the pale-face lodges,” they would say.
So all one winter
Was great hunting on that shore;
Much maize was pounded,
And of acorn oil great store
Was tried;
And collops of smoked deer meat set aside,
And skins and furs,
And furs and skins,
And bales of furs beside.

And all that winter, too,
The smoke eddied
From many a huge canoe,
Hollowed by flame from cypress trees
That with stone ax and fire
The Sewee shaped to the good shape
Of his desire.

So when next spring
The traders came from Charles Town,
Bringing a gift of blankets from the king,
The Sewees would not trade a pelt—
Saying, “We go to see
The Great White Father in his own tepee—
Heap, heap much rum!”
And then they passed the pipe of peace,
And puffed it, and looked glum.

Carolina Chansons

The traders thought the redskins must be daft;
They saw the huge canoes,
And, wondering at their use,
Asked, "What will you do with these?"
And the chief pointed east across the seas;
And then the pale-face laughed.

And yet—
There was a story told
By one of Black Beard's men
Who had done evil things for gold,
That one morning, out at sea,
The fog made a sudden lift,
And from the high poop, looking through the rift,
He saw
Twenty canoes, each with six warriors,
Paddling straight toward the rising sun,
Where the wind made a flaw—
He swore he saw
And counted twenty hulls,
Circled about by screaming gulls—
Then such a storm came down
That some prayed on that hellion ship,
But he did not—
He was not born to drown.

This was the tale
Told with much bluster,

The Sewees of Sewee Bay

Over ale
And oaths,
At Charles Town.
He *swore* he saw the Indians in the dawn,
And *he'd be danged!*
And by Christ's Mother—
Take his rings in pawn!
But he was hanged
With poor Stede Bonnet, later on.

H. A.

LA FAYETTE LANDS *

THAT evening, gathered on the vessel's poop,
They saw the glimmering land,
And far lights moved there,
As once Columbus saw them, winking, strange;
Around the ship two darkies in a small canoe
Paddled and grinned, and held up silver fish.

Over the high ship's tumble-home
A pinnace slid,
Slow, lowered from the squealing davit-ropes,
And from a port a-square with lantern light,
The little, leather trunks were passed,
Ironbound and quaint; while down the vessel's side
With voluble advice, *bon voyage* and *au revoir*,
The chatting Frenchmen came—
Click-clap of rapiers clipping on hard boots,
Cocked hats and merry eyes.

The great ship backs its yards,
With drooping sails, await,
A spider-web of spars and lantern-lights,
While like a pilot shark, the slim canoe,

* See the note at the back of the book.

La Fayette Lands

A V-shaped ripple wrinkling from its jaws,
Slides noiselessly across the swells,
Leading the swinging boat's crew to the beach;
And all the world slides up—
And then the stars slide down—
As ocean breathes; while evening falls,
And destiny is being rowed ashore.

The twilight-muffled bells of town, the bark of
dogs,
The distant shouts, and smell of burning wood,
Fall graciously upon their sea-tired sense.
Wide-trousered, barefoot sailors carry them to land,
Tho' snake-voiced waves flaunt frothing up the
beach;
The horse-hide trunks are piled upon a dune;
And there a little Frenchman takes his stand,
Hawk-faced and ardent,
While his brown cloak droops about him
Like young falcon plumes.

Gray beach, gray twilight, and gray sea—
How strange the scrub palmettoes down the coast!
No purple-castled heights, like dear Auvergne,
Against the background of the *Puy de Dome*,
But land as level as the sea, a sandy road
That twists through myrtle thickets
Where the black boys lead.

Carolina Chansons

Far down a moss-draped avenue of oaks
There is a flash of torches, and the lights
Go flitting past the bottle panes;
A cracked plantation bell dull-clangs;
The beagles bay,
Black faces swarm, with ivory eyeballs glazed—
Court dwarfs that served thick chocolate, on their knees
In damasked, perfumed rooms at grand Versailles,
Were all the blacks the French had ever seen.

Major Huger, lace-ruffled shirt, knee-breeks,
A saddle-pistol in his hand,
Waits on the terrace,
Ready for "hospitality " to British privateers;
But now no London accent takes his ears,
No English bow so low, "Good evening, *sair*;
I am de la Fayette, and these, monsieur,
My friends, and this, le Baron Kalb."

Welcome's the custom of the time and land—
And these are noblemen of France!
Now is Bartholomew for turkeycocks,
Old wines decant, the chandeliers flare up,
The slave row brims with lights;
And horses gallop off to summon guests.

After the ship—how good the spacious rooms!
How strange mosquito canopies on beds!

La Fayette Lands

Knights of St. Louis sniff the frying yams,
Venison, and turtle,—
The old green turtle died tonight—
The children's eyes grow wider on the stairs.

Down in the library,
The Marquis, writing back to old Auvergne,
Has sanded down the ink;
Again the quill pen squeaks:
"A ship will sail tomorrow back to France,
By special providence for you, dear wife;
Tonight there will be toasts to Washington,
To our good Louis and his Antoinette—
There will be toasts tonight for la Fayette."
He melts the wax;
Look, how the candle gutters at the flame!
And now he seals the letter with his ring.

H. A.

THE PRIEST AND THE PIRATE *

A BALLAD OF THEODOSIA BURR

AND must the old priest wake with fright
Because the wind is high tonight?
Because the yellow moonlight dead,
Lies silent as a word unsaid—
What dreams had he upon his bed?

Listen—the storm!

The winter moon scuds high and bare;
Her light is old upon his hair;
The gray priest muses in a prayer:

“Christ Jesus, when I come to die
Grant me a clean, sweet, summer sky,
Without the mad wind’s panther cry.
Send me a little garden breeze
To gossip in magnolia trees;
For I have heard, these fifty years,
Confessions muttered at my ears,
Till every mumble of the wind
Is like tired voices that have sinned,

* See the note at the back of the book.

The Priest and the Pirate

And furtive skirling of the leaves
Like feet about the priest-house eaves,
And moans seem like the unforgiven
That mutter at the gate of heaven,
Ghosts from the sea that passed unshriven.

And it was just this time of night
There came a boy with lantern light
And he was linen-pale with fright;
It was not hard to guess my task,
Although I raised the sash to ask—
'Oh, Father,' cried the boy, 'Oh, come!
Quickly with the *viaticum*!
The sailor-man is going to die!'
The thirsty silence drank his cry.
A starless stillness damped the air,
While his shrill voice kept piping there,
'The sailor-man is going to die'—
The huge drops splattered from the sky.

I shivered at my midnight toil,
But took the elements and oil,
And hurried down into the street
That barked and clamored at our feet—
And as we ran there came a hum
Of round shot slithered on a drum,
While like a lid of sound shut down
The thunder-cloud upon the town;

Carolina Chansons

Jalousies banged and loose roofs slammed,
Like hornbooks fluttered by the damned;
And like a drover's whip the rain
Cracked in the driving hurricane.

Only the lightning showed the door
That like two cats we darted for;
It almost gave a man a qualm
To find the house inside so calm.

I sloshed all dripping up the stair,
Up to an attic room a-glare
With candle-shine and lightning-flare—
With little draughts that moved its hair
A wrinkled mummy sat a-stare,
Rigid, huddling in a chair.
I thought at first the thing was dead
Until the eyes slid in its head.

It seemed as if the Banshee storm
Knocked screaming for his withered form;
It shrieked and whistled like a parrot,
Clucking and stuttering through the garret.
With-out, the mailéd hands of hail
Battered the casements, and the gale
About his low roof shuddered, sighing,
As if it knew that he was dying.

The Priest and the Pirate

It breathed like waiting beasts outside,
While soft feet made the shingles slide.

Then, like a blow upon the cheek,
The mummy's voice began to speak:

'Give me a priest! I'm going to die!'
The Banshee wind took up the cry:
'Give him a priest, he's going to die!'
The old house seemed to rock with laughter,
Shaking its sides and every rafter.

There was a terror in that room
Like faint light streaming from a tomb.
I tried three times before I spoke,
And then the bald words made me choke:
'Be quiet, man, for I am come
To bring you the *viaticum*!'—
I made the sign of holiness.
He rattled out a startled cry.
I whispered low, 'Confess, confess!'
His thin hands quivered with distress.
It is a bitter thing to die.

Just when a blast fell on the town,
I felt his lean claws clutch me down.
It seemed as if the hands of death
Were beating at my breast for breath;

Carolina Chansons

His arms were like a twisted rope
Of rotten strands that tugged at hope.
'Listen, my father, listen well!'
The wind went tolling like a bell:

*'She's lying fifty fathoms deep,
Where fishes like white birds go by
Through water-air in ocean-land;
She has a prayer-book in her hand—
Tonight she walks; tonight she spoke;
Her hair goes floating out and up,
Blown one way, with the water weeds,
Always one way, like amber smoke.*

*She asks the gift she gave to me—
This ring—I cannot get it off!'*
His hand and hand fought like two claws—
'I hear her calling from the sea!'
His terror made my own heart pause.

His voice went moaning with the wind,
And groaned and rattled, *'I have sinned,'*
And moaned and murmured at my ear
Of bat-winged angels standing near.

*'The little schooner "Patriot"—
I can't forget the vessel's name;*

The Priest and the Pirate

*We met her rounding Naggs Head Bank;
We made her people walk the plank,
Twelve men whose faces I forgot.*

*But there was one sweet lady there,
With lovely eyes and lovely hair,
Whose face has stayed like pain and care.
For every man she made a prayer;
And when the last had found the sea,
I cried to her to pray for me.*

*She prayed—and took this ring, and said:
“Wear this for me when I am dead.”
She bowed her head, then steadfastly
She walked into the hungry sea.
But silent words were on her lips,
And there was comfort in her hand;
It was as if she walked a bridge
That led into a pleasant land.
All that was long and long ago,
So long ago this ring has grown
To be a very part of me,
One with my finger and the bone.’
His voice went trailing in a moan.*

*‘This is her ring—
This is her ring!*

Carolina Chansons

I dare not die and wear the thing!
His hand plucked at his finger thin
As if to ease him of his sin.
I gave a sudden gasping shout—
The wind that blew the window in
Had blown the candle out.

'Quick, father, quick!
The ring . . . her name . . . '
There came a jagged spurt of flame;
The window seemed a furnace door
That gave upon a bed of ore;
The thunder rumbled out the muttered
Words that his failing tongue had uttered—
Another flash, a rending crack—
The old man crumpled like a sack;
I felt his stringy arms go slack.
How could he sit so dead, so still!
While wind snouts snuffed along the sill?

White shone his glimmering face, and dull
The sodden silence of the lull,
For when he died the wind had dropt;
And with his heart the storm had stopt,
All but a far-off mouthing sound
That seemed to sough from underground;
While silence paused to plan some ill,
Thwarted by thunder growling still.

The Priest and the Pirate

All in the darkness of the place
With lightning playing on its face,
I fumbled with the corpse's ring
To which the dead hands seemed to cling;
The stiffening joints were loth to play—
After awhile it came away!

Out, like a sneak-thief through the gloom,
I tiptoed from the dead man's room;
The door behind me like a hatch
Banged—the white splash of my match
Made shadow shapes dance on the wall
As if the devil pulled the string.
The light ran melting round the ring;
Inside the worn script scrawled a-blur:

‘*J. A. to Theodosia Burr*’

Confession is a sacred thing!
I'll keep his secret like the sea;
The ring goes to the grave with me.”

H. A.

PALMETTO TOWN

SEA-ISLAND winds sweep through Palmetto Town,
S Bringing with piney tang the old romance
Of Pirates and of smuggling gentlemen;
And tongues as languorous as southern France
Flow down her streets like water-talk at fords;
While through iron gates where pickaninnies sprawl,
The sound floats back, in rippled banjo chords,
From lush magnolia shade where mockers call.
Mornings, the flower-women hawk their wares—
Bronze caryatids of a genial race,
Bearing the bloom-heaped baskets on their heads;
Lithe, with their arms akimbo in wide grace,
Their jasmine nods jestingly at cares—
Turbaned they are, deep-chested, straight and tall,
Banding old English words now seldom heard,
But sweet as Provençal.
Dreams peer like prisoners through her harp-like
gates,
From molten gardens mottled with gray-gloom,
Where lichened sundials shadow ancient dates,
And deep piazzas loom.
Fringing her quays are frayed palmetto posts,
Where clipper ships once moored along the ways,

Palmetto Town

And fanlight doorways, sunstruck with old ghosts,
Sicken with loves of her lost yesterdays.
Often I halt upon some gabled walk,
Thinking I see the ear-ringed *picaroons*,
Slashed with a sash or Spanish *folderols*,
Gambling for moidores or for gold doubloons.
But they have gone where night goes after day,
And the old streets are gay with whistled tunes,
Bright with the lilt of scarlet parasols,
Carried by honey-voiced young octoroons.

H. A.

CAROLINA SPRING SONG

AGAINST the swart magnolias' sheen
A Pronged maples, like a stag's new horn,
Stand gouted red upon the green,
In March when shaggy buds are shorn.

Then all a mist-streaked, sunny day
The long sea-islands lean to hear
A water harp that shallows play
To lull the beaches' fluted ear.

When this same music wakes the gift
Of pregnant beauty in the sod,
And makes the uneasy vultures shift
Like evil things afraid of God,

Then, then it is I love to drift
Upon the flood-tide's lazy swirls,
While from the level rice fields lift
The spiritu'ls of darky girls.

I hear them singing in the fields
Like voices from the long-ago;
They speak to me of somber worlds
And sorrows that the humble know;

Carolina Spring Song

Of sorrow—yet their tones release
A harmony of larger hours
From easy epochs long at peace
Amid an irony of flowers.

So if they sometimes seem a choir
That cast a chill of doubt on spring,
They have still higher notes of fire
Like cardinals upon the wing.

H. A.

THE LAST CREW *

I

SPRING found us early that eventful year,
Seeming to know in her clairvoyant way
The bitterness of hunger and despair
That lay upon the town.
Out of the sheer
Thin altitudes of day
She drifted down
Over the grim blockade
At the harbor mouth,
Trailing her beauty over the decay
That war had made,
Gilding old ruins with her jasmine spray,
Distilling warm moist perfume
From chill winter shade.

Out of the south
She brought the whisperings
Of questing wings.
Then, flame on flame,
The cardinals came,
Blowing like driven brands

* See the note at the back of the book.

The Last Crew

Up from the sultry lands
Where Summer's happy fires always burn.
Old silences, that pain
Had held too close and long,
Stirred to the mocker's song,
And hope looked out again
From tired eyes.

Down where the White Point Gardens drank the sun,
And rippled to the lift of springing grass,
The women came;
And after them the aged, and the lame
That war had hurled back at them like a taunt.
And always, as they talked of little things,
How violets were purpling the shade
More early than in all remembered Springs,
And how the tides seemed higher than last year,
Their gaze went drifting out across the bay
To where,
Thrusting out of the mists,
Like hostile fists,
Waited the close blockade—
Then, dim to left and right,
The curving islands with their shattered mounds
That had been forts;
Mounds, which in spite
Of four long years of rending agony
Still held against the light;

Carolina Chansons

Faint wraiths of color
For the breeze to lift
And flatten into faded red and white.

These sunny islands were not meant for wars;
See, how they curve away
Before the bay,
Bidding the voyager pause.
Warm with the hoarded suns of centuries,
Young with the garnered youth of many Springs,
They laugh like happy bathers, while the seas
Break in their open arms,
And the slow-moving breeze
Draws languid fingers down their placid brows.
Even the surly ocean knows their charms,
And under the shrill laughter of the surf,
He booms and sings his heavy monotone.

II

There are rare nights among these waterways
When Spring first treads the meadows of the marsh,
Leaving faint footprints of elusive green
To glimmer as she strays,
Breaking the Winter silence with the harsh
Sharp call of waterfowl;
Rubbing dim shifting pastels in the scene
With white of moon

The Last Crew

And blur of scudding cloud,
Until the myrtle thickets
And the sand,
The silent streams,
And the substantial land
Go drifting down the tide of night
Aswoon.

On such a night as this
I saw the last crew go
Out of a world too beautiful to leave.
Only a chosen few
Beside the crew
Were gathered on the pier;
And in the ebb and flow
Of dark and moon, we saw them fare
Straight past the row of coffins
Where the fifth crew lay
Waiting their last short voyage
Across the bay.

And, as they went, not one among them swerved,
But eyes went homing swiftly to the West,
Where, faint and very few,
The windows of the town called out to them
Yet held them nerved
And ready for the test.
Young every one, they brought life at its best.

Carolina Chansons

In the taut stillness, not a word
Was uttered, but one heard
The deep slow orchestration of the night
Swell and relapse; as swiftly, one by one,
Cutting a silhouette against the gray,
They rose, then dropped out softly like a dream
Into the rocking shadows of the stream.

A sudden grind of metal scarred the hush;
A marsh-hen threshed the water with her wings,
And, for a breath, the marsh life woke and throbbed.
Then, down beneath our feet, we caught the gleam
Of folded water flaring left and right,
While, with a noiseless rush,
A shadow darker than the rest
Drew from its fellows swarming round the quay,
Took an oncoming breaker,
Shook its shoulders free,
And faced the sea.

Then came an interval that seemed to be
Part of eternity.
Years might have passed, or seconds;
No one knew!
Close in the dark we huddled, each to each,
Too stirred for speech.
Our senses, sharpened to an agony,
Drew out across the water till the ache

The Last Crew

Was more than we could bear;
Till eyes could almost see,
Ears almost hear.
And waiting there,
I seemed to feel the beach
Slip from my reach,
While all the stars went blank.
The smell of oil and death enveloped me,
And I could feel
The crouching figures straining at a crank,
Knees under chins, and heads drawn sharply down,
The heave and sag of shoulders,
Sting of sweat;
An eighth braced figure stooping to a wheel,
Body to body in the stifling gloom,
The sob and gasp of breath against an air
Empty and damp and fetid as a tomb.
With them I seemed to reel
Beneath the spin and heel
When combers took them fair,
Bruising their bodies,
Lifting black water where
Their feet clutched desperate at the floor.

And as each body spent out of its ebbing store
Of strength and hope,
I felt the forward thrust,
At first so sure,

Carolina Chansons

Fail in its rhythm,
Falter slow,
And slower—
Hang an endless moment—
Till in a rush came fear—
Fear of the sea, that it might win again,
Gathering one crew more,
Making them pay in vain.

Then through the horror of it, like a clear
Sweet wind among the stars,
I felt the lift
And drive of heart and will
Working their miracles until
Spent muscles tensed again to offer all
In one transcendent gift.

III

A sudden flood of moonlight drenched the sea,
Pointing the scene in sharp, strong black and white.
Sumter came shouldering through the night,
Battered and grim.
The curve of ships shook off their dim
Vague outlines of a dream;
And stood, patient as death,
So certain in their pride,
So satisfied

The Last Crew

To wait
The slow inevitableness of Fate.

Close, where the channel
Narrowed to the bay,
The *Housatonic* lay
Black on the moonlit tide,
Her wide
High sweep of spars
Flaunting their arrogance among the stars.

Darkness again,
Swift-winged and absolute,
Gulping the stars,
Folding the ships and sea,
Holding us waiting, mute.
Then, slowly in the void,
There grew a certainty
That silenced fear.
The very air
Was stirring to the march of Destiny.

One blinding second out of endless time
Fell, sundering the night.
I saw the *Housatonic* hurled,
A ship of light,
Out of a molten sea,
Hang an unending pulse-beat,

Carolina Chansons

Glowing, stark;
While the hot clouds flung back a sullen roar.
Then all her pride, so confident and sure,
Went reeling down the dark.

Out of the blackness wave on livid wave
Leapt into being—thundered to our feet;
Counting the moments for us, beat by beat,
Until the last and smallest dwindled past,
Trailing its pallor like a winding-sheet
Over the last crew and its chosen grave.

IV

Morning swirled in from the sea,
And down by the low river-wall,
In a long unforgettable row,
Man faces tremulous, old;
Terrible faces of youth,
Broken and seared by the war,
Where swift fire kindled and blazed
From embers hot under the years,
While hands gripped a cane or a crutch;
Patient dumb faces of women,
Mothers, sisters, and wives:
And the vessel hull-down in the sea,
Where the waters, just stirring from sleep,
Lifted bright hands to the sun,

The Last Crew

Hiding their lusty young dead,
Holding them jealously close
Down to the cold harbor floor.

There would be eight of them.
Here in the gathering light
Were waiting eight women or more
Who were destined forever to pay,
Who never again would laugh back
Into the eyes of life
In the old glad, confident way.
Each huddled dumbly to each;
But eyes could not lift from the sea,
Only hands touched in the dawn.

*"He would have gone, my man;
He was like that. In the night
When I awoke with a start,
And brought his voice up from my dream:
That was goodbye and godspeed.
I know he is there with the rest."*

Brave, but with quivering lips,
Each alone in the press of the crowd,
Was saying it over and over.

The day flooded all of the sky;
And the ships of the sullen blockade

Carolina Chansons

Weighed anchor and drew down the wind,
Leaving their wreck to the waves.
Hour heaved slowly on hour,
Yet how could the city rejoice
With the women out there by the wall!
Night grew under the wharves,
And crept through the listening streets,
Until only the red of the tiles
Seemed warm from the breath of the day;
And the faces that waited and watched
Blurred into a wavering line,
Like foam on the curve of the dark,
Down there by the reticent sea.

What if the darkness should bring
The lean blockade-runners across
With food for the hungry and spent . . .
Who could joy in the sudden release
While the faces, still-smiling, but wan,
Turned slowly to hallow the town?

D. H.

LANDBOUND

BRING me one breath from the deep salt sea,
Ye vagrant upland airs!
Over your forest and field and lea,
From the windy deeps that have mothered me,
To the heart of one who cares.

Clear to the peace of the sunlit park,
You bring with your evening lull
The vesper song of the meadow lark;
But my soul is sick for the seething dark,
And the scream of a wind-blown gull.

And bring to me from the ocean's breast
No crooning lullaby;
But the shout of a bleak storm-riven crest
As it shoulders up in the sodden West
And hurtles down the sky.

That, breathing deep, I may feel the sweep
Of the wind and the driving rain.
For so I know that my heart will leap
To meet the call of the strident deep,
And will thrill to life again.

D. H.

TWO PAGES
FROM THE BOOK OF THE SEA ISLANDS

PAGE ONE

SHADOWS

THERE is deliberateness in all sea-island ways,
As alien to our days as stone wheels are.
The Islands cannot see the use of life
Which only lives for change.
There days are flat,
And all things must move slowly;
Even the seasons are conservative—
No sudden flaunting of wild colors in the fall,
Only a gradual fading of the green,
As if the earth turned slowly,
Or looked with one still face upon the sun
As Venus does—
Until the trees, the fields, the marshes,
All turn dun, dull Quaker-brown,
And a mild winter settles down,
And mosses are more gray.

All human souls are glasses which reflect
The aspects of the outer world;

Pages from Book of Sea Islands

See what terrible gods the huge Himalayas bred!
And the fierce Jewish Jaywah came
From the hot Syrian deserts
With his inhibitory decalogue.
The gods of little hills are always tame;
Here God is dull, where all things stay the same.

No change on these sea-islands!
The huge piled clouds range
White in the cobalt sky;
The moss hangs,
And the strong, tiring sea-winds blow—
While day on glistening day goes by.

The horses plow with hanging heads,
Slow, followed by a black-faced man,
Indifferent to the sun;
The old cotton bushes hang with whitened heads;
And there among the live-oak trees,
Peep the small whitewashed cabins,
Painted blue, perhaps, and scarlet-turbaned women,
Ample-hipped, with voices soft and warm
With the lean hounds and chocolate children swarm.

Day after day the ocean pumps
The awful valve-gates of his heart,
Diastole and systole through these estuaries;
The tides flow in long, gray, weed-streaked lines;

Carolina Chansons

The salt water, like the planet's lifeblood, goes
As if the earth were breathing with long-taken breaths
And we were very near her heart.

No wonder that these faces show a tired dismay,
Looking on burning suns, and scarcely blithe in
 May;
Spring's coming is too fierce with life;
And summer is too long;
The stunted pine trees struggle with the sand
Till the eyes sicken with their dwarfing strife.

There are old women here among these island homes,
With dull brown eyes that look at something gray,
And tight silver hair, drawn back in lines,
Like the beach grass that's always blown one way;
With such a melancholy in their faces
I know that they have lived long in these places.
The tides, the hooting owls, the daylight moons,
The leprous lights and shadows of the mosses,
The funereal woodlands of these coasts,
Draped like a perpetual hearse,
And memories of an old war's ancient losses,
Dwell in their faces' shadows like gray ghosts.
And worse—
The terror of the black man always near—
The drab level of the ricefields and the marsh
Lends them a mask of fear.

Pages from Book of Sea Islands

PAGE TWO

SUNSHINE

THIS is a different page.

Do you suppose the sun here lavishes his heat
For nothing, in these islands by the sea?
No! The great green-mottled melons ripen in the fields,
Bleeding with scarlet, juicy pith deliciously;
And the exuberant yams grow golden, thick and sweet;
And white potatoes, in grave-rows,
With leaves as rough as cat tongues;
And pearly onions, and cabbages
With white flesh, sweet as chicken meat.

These the black boatmen bring to town
On barges, heaped with severed breasts of leaves,
Driven by *put-put* engines
Down the long canals, quavering with song,
With hail and chuckle to the docks along,
Seeing their dark faces down below
Reduplicated in the sunset glow,
While from the shore stretch out the quivering lines
Of the flat, palm-like, reflected pines
That inland lie like ranges of dark hills in lines.
And so to town—
Weaving odd baskets of sweet grass,
Lazily and slow,
To sell in the arcaded market,
Where men sold their fathers not so long ago.

Carolina Chansons

For all their poverty,
These patient black men live
A life rich in warm colors of the fields,
Sunshine and hearty foods,
Delighted with the gifts that earth can give,
And old tales of *Plateye* and *Bre'r Rabbit*;
While the golden-velvet cornpone browns
Underneath the lid among hot ashes,
Where the *groundnuts* roast,
Round shadowy fires at nights,
With tales of graveyard ghost,
While eery spirituals ring,
And organ voices sing,
And sticks knock maddening rhythms on the floor
To shuffling youngsters "cutting " buck-and-wing;
Dogs bark;
And dog-eyed pickaninnies peek about the door.

Sundays, along the moss-draped roads,
The beribboned black folk go to church
By threes and twos, carrying their shoes,
With orange turbans, gingham, rainbow hats;
Then bucks flaunt tiger-lily ties and watchet suits,
Smoking cob pipes and faintly sweet cheroots.
Wagons with oval wheels and kitchen chairs screech by,
Where Joseph-coated white-teethed maidens sit
Demurely,
While the old mule rolls back the ivory of his eye.

Pages from Book of Sea Islands

Soon from the whitewashed churches roll away
Among the live oak trees,
Rivers of melancholy harmonies,
Full of the sorrows of the centuries
The white man hears, but cannot feel.

But it is always Sunday on sea-islands.
Plantation bells, calling the pickers from the fields,
Are like old temple gongs;
And the wind tells monodies among the pines,
Playing upon their strings the ocean's songs;
The ducks fly in long, trailing lines;
Skeows *squonk* and marsh-hens *quank*
Among the tidal flats and rushes rank on rank;
On island tufts the heron feeds its viscid young;
And the quick mocker catches
From lips of sons of slaves the eery snatches,
And trolls them as no lips have ever sung.

Oh! It is good to be here in the spring,
When water still stays solid in the North,
When the first jasmine rings its golden bells,
And the "wild wistaria" puts forth;
But most because the sea then changes tone;
Talking a whit less drear,
It gossips in a smoother monotone,
Whispering moon-scandal in the old earth's ear.

H. A.

MODERN PHILOSOPHER

THEY fight your battles for you every day,
The zealous ones, who sorrow in your life.
Undaunted by a century of strife,
With urgent fingers still they point the way
To drawing rooms, in decorous array,
And moral Heavens where no casual wife
May share your lot; where dice and ready knife
Are barred; and feet are silent when you pray.

But you have music in your shuffling feet,
And spirituals for a lenient Lord,
Who lets you sing your promises away.
You hold your sunny corner of the street,
And pluck deep beauty from a banjo chord:
Philosopher whose future is today!

D. H.

UPSTAIRS DOWNSTAIRS

THE judge, who lives impeccably upstairs
With dull decorum and its implication,
Has all his servants in to family prayers,
And edifies *his* soul with exhortation.

Meanwhile his blacks live wastefully downstairs;
Not always chaste, they manage to exist
With less decorum than the judge upstairs,
And find withal a something that he missed.

This painful fact a Swede philosopher,
Who tarried for a fortnight in our city,
Remarked, one evening at the meal, before
We paralyzed him silent with our pity—

Saying the black man living with the white
Had given more than white men could requite.

H. A.

HAG-HOLLERIN' TIME

BLACK Julius peered out from the galley fly;
Behind Jim Island, lying long and dim;
An infra owl-light tinged the twilight sky
As if a bonfire burned for cherubim.

Dark orange flames came leering through the pines,
And then the moon's face, struggling with a sneeze,
Along the flat horizon's level lines
Her nostrils fingered with palmetto trees.

Her platinum wand made water wrinkles buckle;
Old Julius gave appreciative chuckle;
"It's jes about hag-hollerin' time," he said.
I watched the globous buckeyes in his head

Peer back along the bloody moon-wash dim
To see the fish-tailed water-witches swim.

H. A.

MACABRE IN MACAWS

AFTER the hurricane of the late forties,
Peter Polite says, in the live-oak trees
Were weird, macabre macaws
And ash-colored cockatoos, blown overseas
From Nassau and the West Indies.
These hopped about like dead men's thoughts
Among the draggled Spanish moss,
Preening themselves, all at a loss,
Mewing faint *caws*,
And shrieking from nostalgia—
With dull screams like a child
Born with neuralgia—
And this seems true to me,
Fitting the landscape's drab grotesquery.

H. A.

GAMESTERS ALL *

THE river boat had loitered down its way;
The ropes were coiled, and business for the day
Was done. The cruel noon closed down
And cupped the town.
Stray voices called across the blinding heat,
Then drifted off to shadowy retreat
Among the sheds.
The waters of the bay
Sucked away
In tepid swirls, as listless as the day.
Silence closed about me, like a wall,
Final and obstinate as death.
Until I longed to break it with a call,
Or barter life for one deep, windy breath.

A mellow laugh came rippling
Across the stagnant air,
Lifting it into little waves of life.
Then, true and clear,
I caught a snatch of harmony;
Sure lilting tenor, and a drowsing bass,
Elusive chords to weave and interlace,

* "Contemporary Verse," prize poem for 1921.

Gamesters All

And poignant little minors, broken short,
Like robins calling June—
And then the tune:
“Oh, nobody knows when de Lord is goin ter call,
Roll dem bones.
It may be in de Winter time, and maybe in de Fall,
Roll dem bones.
But yer got ter leabe yer baby an yer home an all—
So roll dem bones,
Oh my brudder,
Oh my brudder,
Oh my brudder,
Roll dem bones!”

There they squatted, gambling away
Their meagre pay;
Fatalists all.
I heard the muted fall
Of dice, then the assured,
Retrieving sweep of hand on roughened board.

I thought it good to see
Four lives so free
From care, so indolently sure of each tomorrow,
And hearts attuned to sing away a sorrow.

Then, like a shot
Out of the hot

Carolina Chansons

Still air, I heard a call:
"Throw up your hands! I've got you all!
It's thirty days for craps.
Come, Tony, Paul!
Now, Joe, don't be a fool!
I've got you cool."

I saw Joe's eyes, and knew he'd never go.
Not Joe, the swiftest hand in River Bow!
Springing from where he sat, straight, cleanly made,
He soared, a leaping shadow from the shade
With fifty feet to go.
It was the stiffest hand he ever played.
To win the corner meant
Deep, sweet content
Among his laughing kind;
To lose, to suffer blind,
Degrading slavery upon "the gang,"
With killing suns, and fever-ridden nights
Behind relentless bars
Of prison cars.

He hung a breathless second in the sun,
The staring road before him. Then, like one
Who stakes his all, and has a gamester's heart,
His laughter flashed.
He lunged—I gave a start.
God! What a man!

Gamesters All

The massive shoulders hunched, and as he ran
With head bent low, and splendid length of limb,
I almost felt the beat
Of passionate life that surged in him
And winged his spurning feet.

And then my eyes went dim.
The Marshal's gun was out.
I saw the grim
Short barrel, and his face
Aflame with the excitement of the chase.
He was an honest sportsman, as they go.
He never shot a doe,
Or spotted fawn,
Or partridge on the ground.
And, as for Joe,
He'd wait until he had a yard to go.
Then, if he missed, he'd laugh and call it square.
My gaze leapt to the corner—waited there.
And now an arm would reach it. I saw hope flare
Across the runner's face.

Then, like a pang
In my own heart,
The pistol rang.

The form I watched soared forward, spun the curve.
"By God, you've missed!"

Carolina Chansons

The Marshal shook his head.
No, there he lay, face downward in the road.
“I reckon he was dead
Before he hit the ground,”
The Marshal said.
“Just once, at fifty feet,
A moving target too.
That’s just about as good
As any man could do!
A little tough;
But, since he ran,
I call it fair enough.”

He mopped his head, and started down the road.
The silence eddied round him, turned and flowed
Slowly back and pressed against the ears.
Until unnumbered flies set it to droning,
And, down the heat, I heard a woman moaning.

D. H.

ECLIPSE

ONCE melodies of street-cries washed these walls,
Glad as the refluxing song
Of cheerful waters from a happy spring
That shout their way along;
Such cries were born in other days from lips
A spirit taught to sing. Now it is gone!

Memory expects those hymns for shrimp and prawn,
Or the mellifluous chaunt from the black gorge
Of Orpheus inside a murky skin,
Who looked the gold sun in the eye
While garden mists grew thin,
And intoned "*Hoppin' John!*"

As when the shadow of the gray eclipse
Haggards the countryside,
When moon-fooled birds have nothing more to say,
And soft untimely bats begin to slide;
As darkness sweeps the morning light away,
So silence brushes music now from lips.

Oh! Can it be the songless spirit of this age
Has slain the ancient music, or that ears

Carolina Chansons

Have harsher thresholds? Only this I know:
The streets grow more discordant with the years;
And that which bids the huckster sing no more,
Will drive the flower-woman from the door.

H. A.

EDGAR ALLAN POE*

ONCE in the starlight
When the tides were low,
And the surf fell sobbing
To the undertow,
I trod the windless dunes
Alone with Edgar Poe.

Dim and far behind us,
Like a fabled bloom
On the myrtle thickets,
In the swaying gloom
Hung the clustered windows
Of the barrack-room.

Faint on the evening
Tenuous and far
As the beauty shaken
From a vagrant star,
Throbbled the ache and passion
Of an old guitar.

Life closed behind us
Like a swinging gate,

* See the note on Poe.

Carolina Chansons

Leaving us unfettered
And emancipate;
Confidants of Destiny,
Intimates of Fate.

I could only cower,
Silent, while the night,
Seething with its planets,
Parted to our sight,
Showing us infinity
In its breadth and height.

But my chosen comrade,
Tossing back his hair
With the old loved gesture,
Raised his face, and there
Shone the agony that those
Loved of God must bear.

Oh, we heard the many things
Silence has to say;
He and I together
As alone we lay
Waiting for the slow, sweet
Miracle of day.

When the bugle's silver
Spiralled up the dawn,

Edgar Allan Poe

Dew-clear, night-cool,
And the stars were gone,
I arose exultant,
Like a man new born.

But my friend and master,
Heavy-limbed and spent,
Turned, as one must turn at last
From the sacrament;
And his eyes were deep with God's
Burning discontent.

D. H.

ALCHEMY *

SOME souls are strangers in this bourne;
Beauty is born from such men's discontent;
Earth's grass and stones,
Her seas, her forests, and her air
Are seas and forests till they mirror on some pool
Unusually reflecting in an exile's mind,
Who tarries here protesting and alone;
And then they get strange shapes from memories of
other stars
The banished knew, or spheres he dreams will be.
Thus is the fivefold vision of the earth recast
By ghostly alchemy.

But there are favored spots
Where all earth's moods conspire to make a show
Of things to be transmuted into beauty
By alchemic minds.
Such is this island beach where Poe once walked,
And heard the melic throbbing of the sea,
With muffled sound of harbor bells—
Bells—he loved bells!

* See the note on Poe.

Alchemy

And here are drifting ghosts of city chimes
Come over water through the evening mist,
Like knells from death-ships off the coasts of spectral
lands.

I think some dusk their metal voices
Yet will call him back
To walk upon this magic beach again,
While Grief holds carnival upon the harbor bar.
Heralded by ravens from another air,
The master will pass, pacing here,
Wrapped in a cape dark as the unborn moon.
There will be lightning underneath a star;
And he will speak to me
Of archipelagoes forgot,
Atolls in sailless seas, where dreams have married
thought.

H. A.

OSCEOLA *

AN EPITAPH

THE feathers of the eagle-bonnets ride upon the
north wind;
The sachems and their totems have perished in the
fire;
Through the valleys and the rivers and the moun-
tains that you fought for
Beats the quick desire.
In the happy hunting ground of proven warriors,
You have passed the pipe of peace at council fire
With the pale-face and the Zulus' mighty chief-
tains—
Rest with dead desire.

H. A.

* The Indian Chief, Osceola, lies buried at Fort Moultrie.

MAGNOLIA GARDENS

A PROSE-POEM

IN the spring when the first midges dance and warm days lure the last-year's butterfly, the scarlet of the cardinals begins to flicker through the ivory smoke of the mosses. Then the alligator leaves his winter ooze, and the widening "O " of the ripple which his gar-like nose makes, travels slowly across the sullen ponds, where the pendant gonfalons of the mosses kiss their imaginary duplicates, hanging head downward in the red water.

When the first frog honks with the bull-voiced trumpet of resurgent spring, the jasmine rings its little hawk-bells, golden harp notes through the forest; and the usurping wistaria assumes the purple, reigning imperial and alone, flaunting its *palidementum* in a cascade of lilac amid the matrix of the mosses. Its sleek, muscular vine-arms writhe round the clasped bodies of live oaks as if two lovers slept beneath a cloak, and the cloisonné pavilion of their dalliance drips a blue-glaze of shadows overhead.

Underneath this motley canopy of gray and blue, lush with the early tenderness of leaves, the pink

Carolina Chansons

azaleas open light-shy eyes like pupils of albinos, sloughing off delicate pods that smoulder, when the wind blows, live coals among the gray of furnace ashes. Here are magenta carpets fit for leprechauns, when crescent moons glimmer upon the ocher ponds, and the slow fireflies light their phantom lanterns, weaving to and fro about the ivory-orange marble of the tomb.

Each April day brings opalescent waves of birds that dart like living brands about the aisles to light the flower lamps; nonpareils, orioles, and humming-birds, a mist of speed upon their wings, while the blue heron stands one-legged by the ponds, watching the garden till it seethes and flames with colors from the cloaks of mandarins.

High in the ancient forest the magnolias burn the perfect alban lucence of their lamps; white are their ivory cups like priestly linen, and fragrant with the tang of foreign citrons. An esoteric, mirrored swan slides by like Cleopatra's barge, while drums of color beaten by a maniac blend with old tints of Leonardo's dreams, colors that God might see if his own lightning blasted out his eyes.

This march of color chants a strange barbaric fitness of dithyrambic chords, and moves processional

Magnolia Gardens

across the days like some encarnadined durbar, where a huge Ethiopian eunuch in red moon-shaped slippers and an orange turban walks with a glittering scimeter, leading a brace of sleepy leopards drugged and golden eyed; the caparisoned elephants swing down a latticed street; silk shawls hang from balconies, brushing the domed gilt of howdahs; and ruby-roped, the maharajahs sway behind the mahout with his peavey-goad.

The stark denial of the blue-ribbed sky looks down upon this garden, where the wantonness of earth is flaunted in the spring against the face of heaven's void sterility. Here stolid faces look ashamed. When the sun leans on boreal wings, there is a month that lovers walk here justified, while flower throats cry in vast choirs, "Glory to life! " and the uplifted trumpets of vine tubas shout with noise of color set to notes of bloom.

MIDDLETON GARDEN

THIS is a garden where the Son of Heaven
Well might walk,
With all his dragon-broidered mandarins,
To the plucked sound of tenor instruments,
With peacocks, kites, and little red balloons,
Mirrored with incense and rice-paper lights,
And old bronze lanterns on the full moon nights,
Upon the lacquered, porcelain-pink lagoons.

If cardinals in sun-blood robes were here
To kiss the ring of gorgeous Borgia popes;
Or bold de Gama's loot from Malabar:
Topaz and ruby, chrysolite and beryl,
The golden idol with a thousand hands,
And ropes of pearl;
They would seem lesser than these flowers are,
Whose masculine magnificence makes riches pale.

And yet with all its oriental hue
There is a touch of Holland,
Of canals at Loo,
Where Orange William planned a boxwood maze.
The house has Flemish curves upon its eaves;

Middleton Garden

Its doorways yearn for buckle-shoed young bloods,
Smoking clay pipes, with lace a-droop from sleeves—
Moonlight on terraces is like a story told
By sleepy link-boys 'round old sedan chairs
In days when tulip bulbs were gold.

The faint, crisp rustle of magnolia leaves
Rasps with the crackling scratch of old brocade,
The low bird-voices ripple like the laugh
Of Watteau beauties coiffured, with pomade;
Here ribboned dandies offered scented snuffs
To other ghosts, beneath the giant trees—
Was that a flash of rose-flamingo stuffs—
Azaleas?—was a sneeze blown down the breeze?

This terrace is a stage set by the years,
Fit for the pageants of the centuries;
That fire-scarred ruin marks an act of tears—
Charm is more winsome coped with tragedies.
Here flaunted tilted hats and crinolines,
Small parasols, hoopskirts, and bombazines,
When turbaned slaves walked dykes in single file,
And rice-fields made horizons, otherwhile.

All, all has passed, but change,
Gnawed by the rat-like teeth of avid years,
The masters, through the door, to mysteries
Beyond blind panels 'mid the moss-scarved trees,

Carolina Chansons

Uncanny gates, where negroes faintly bold,
At high noon in the tide of summer heat,
Stand in the draught of tomb-air deathly cold
That flows like glacial water 'round their feet.

H. A.

THE GOOSE CREEK VOICE

THIS is the low-doored house among funereal trees,
Where one May dusk they brought Louise,
 With music slow,
 And sobbing low,
The old slaves crooning eerily.
She died asleep and weeping wearily.
 She had a poppy-strange disease;
 A beauty that was more than carnal,
How durst they leave her in the charnel?
 She might be sleeping eerily!

Hush! They have locked her in the tomb,
Among the silences and wilting bloom;
Life's melody of voices drifts away—
 Mistaken!

Was it an owlet in the thorns that moaned?
The churchyard moonlight turns ash-gray—
 Hush! Pale Louise!

The dead must not awaken.
Something a twittering cry is uttering.
 Is that a bird there on her breast,
 Lost in the fragrant gloom,
Wakening to morning twilight in the tomb?
No bird—it is her folded hands a-fluttering!

Carolina Chansons

I think I should have died to see her rise
Among the withered wreaths
And spider-cluttered palls
Of her dead uncles' funerals,
While streams of horror fed the blue lakes of her eyes.
I known I would have died to see her rise.

*Over the fields a voice calls from the tomb,
Pleading and pleading drearily,
But all the slaves have fled
And left her talking to her confined dead,
And whimpering eerily.
The young birds die
To see old hands thrust from the window-slit,
Clutching the light in handfuls of despair;
Stark fear has stroked the color from her hair,
While from the window comes
The babbled whisper of her prayer.
Night is like spiders in her mouth;
By day they spin a film across her eyes.
Now night; now day—
The birds come back;
It is another year:
The withering voice they fear
Has nothing more to say.*

But yet once more
Her kinsmen came

The Goose Creek Voice

With nodding plume and pall
And music slow,
And, sobbing low,
They fluttered back the door, and lo!—
She leaned against the slit-window
Her web-like, bony hands against the wall,
And all about her, like a summer cloud
Rippled her leprous hair,
One bleached and shuddering shroud.

H. A.

THE LEAPING POLL

AT early morning when the earth grows cold,
When river mists creep up,
And those asleep are nearest death,
She died.

The feather would not flutter in her breath;
And those who long had watched her slipped away,
Too weary then to weep;
They could do that next day—
They left her lonely on the bed,
Under a long, glistening sheet, in feeble tallow-shine,
Rigid from muffled feet to swathèd head.

This in old days before the Turkish cure
Had driven out the pox;
Next morning, while slave carpenters
Were hammering at the oblong box,
The sun revived her and she breathed again,
Like Lazarus, and in later years grew beautiful,
And was the mother of strong men.

These things her father, master of an ancient place,
Pondered, and read of men in antique times
Who wakened in the charnel from a trance.
Often his eyes would rest on her askance,
And fear grew on him, and strange dreams he had a-bed,

The Leaping Poll

Till waking and asleep he turned his head,
Front-back, front-back, from side to side,
Looking for Death. At last, one night
He heard crisp footfalls in his room,
And stared his soul out in the gloom,
Peering until he died.

But when they broke the seals upon his will,
They found each codicil and long bequest
Was held in trust until
The heirs should carry out his last request—
To burn his body (naming witnesses);
And they, all eagerness to share,
Prepared to carry out this strange behest.

A pile of lightwood on the river bank,
Neighbors on horseback, and the slaves,
With teeth as white as eyeballs, rank on rank,
Watched on the pyre the form wrapped in a shroud,
Lonely among the lolling tongues of flames—
The smoke streamed, trailing in a saffron cloud,
The greedy noise of fire grew loud,
Then, "whiff," the shroud burned with a flare:
The dead man's eyes looked down
Like china moons upon the crowd.
They saw him slowly shake his head,
The thing denied that it was dead,
While from the blacks arose a babblement of prayer.

Carolina Chansons

Surely the head must stop—
Not till the fire caved!
Then from the very top
The loosened poll came with a leap,
Bounding three times, it took the river-steep;
Down, down the river bank—all they
Ran after it like school boys for a ball.
God! How the thing could roll!
It seemed the devil kicked the leaping poll.
At last it stopped at bay,
Staring across a tidal flat,
Where spider lilies frightened day.

They buried it within a lonesome wood,
With trembling hands, beneath a foreign stone.
But there were some who said
It moved its lips;
And when they went away, the earth stirred
And they heard it moan.
Now it comes leaping down the tunnel roads
Where the moss hangs like stalactites,
Screaming out curses, snapping at the toads;
Negroes who pass there on the moonless nights
Behind them hear a sound that stops their breath.
The keen wind whistles through its teeth,
And the white skull goes bounding by
Looking for Death.

H. A.

THE BLOCKADE RUNNER

I

THREE years!
Since I had seen the city, in the time
We waited through the tenseness of the hours,
While nerves were zither strings
For fate to jar upon:
All through that night we counted old St. Michael's
chimes
Now three o'clock—
The bells spoke as they had on marriage days,
With high and silver-happy tongues
Yet somehow they had gained an irony,
For out across the quiet April bay
Grim, new-built forts grinned at old Sumter
Through the morning mist—
One—two—three—four—
And no sound yet! Then—
Thirty minutes like a life too long;
A red flash dirked the night;
I thought a voice cried, "DOOM";
That was the gun that killed a million men.

God! How the city woke!
With what a rush of wonder in her streets,

Carolina Chansons

“*Burr*” of strained voices, earthquakes of feet,
Tramping to rolling drums,
The crowd swept to the Battery.
Roofs were black with gazing folk in knots,
Leveling their spyglasses
Like phalanx spears,
From sea wall to the chimney tops.

Over the rippling harbor came
The growling, bull-dog bark of culverins,
Red rockets curved and plunged
Across the dawn.
The world seemed drunk with confidence
That day—
Some secret nervousness about the slaves;
What they might think or say;
But they did neither;
The bugles shouted at the Citadel.
Hours were punctuated by glad bells,
Soon to be hid away,
And gales of laughter came from gardens,
Where bright tear-dashed eyes must weep farewells
The braver lips refused to falter—
Mouths then seemed only made to kiss
For men in gray,
Who left the ancient houses of proud names,
Through magic gates upon that magic day
When the lost cause was still-born in its hope.

The Blockade Runner

II

And I had gone—
It seemed no man's work then—
To buy supplies from "good friends" at the North—
Two years at old St. Louis and then down the river,
Past winking lights of towns and federal rams,
In flat-boats with a precious freight of barrels,
Marked for the Yankees; but one night
We slipped past their last fort
And floated down to Vicksburg through the dark.
How dull the lanterns glimmered at the quay!
But there was welcome, too,
Proud, thankful hands,
To take the medicine and powder,
And unload sorghum barrels
That we might change to quinine and to gold,
If we could ever get them to Nassau.
The column which they printed in the "News"
On wall-paper, first made me think
That it was worth-while man's work after all.

Then, out across the miles of leaguered states,
Through pine-barrens where frowsy men in gray
Lay with their wounded in the haggard camps—
A glimpse of old times in Atlanta
Like a last febrile glow in well-loved eyes.
Now rolling in flat cars, trundling to the sea,
Back of the bull-head, wood-devouring engines.

Carolina Chansons

At last by night to Charleston
Just before the iron ring closed—
Ours was the last freight train of the war,
Before the anaconda squeezed;
But I had won (perhaps) if we could get
Those precious barrels to England or Nassau.

How changed my city was—
The grass grew in her streets,
And there were blackened ruins raw with fire;
A few old darkies crept along her ways;
The busy thunder of the drays was gone;
And ruin spoke with statue lips.
Only a glimmering candle lurked in landward win-
dows,
Dim through shimmering shutter chinks—
Silence—silence was over all—no bells—
St. Michael's were in hiding,
And St. Philip's spoke another voice,
And rung a blatant dirge to bluecoats, far
* In old Virginia, with Lee's batteries.
The miles of cotton rotted on the wharfs,
And the *Swamp Angel* belled with distant shocks
Like earthquake jars;
There was heat-lightning in the sky
That God had never made,
From our sea-island batteries;

* See the note on the chimes at back of book.

The Blockade Runner

And once a shell fell somewhere in the town
With a despairing scream that hope was dead

Such were the streets—
And it was starving time in houses
Where fat generosity once ran amuck,
No fires in inns, no cheerful bark of hounds,
Or stroke of social hoofs upon the stones.
And the long docks bit the black water
Like old loosened fangs that held the sea
In one last grinning jaw-clamp of despair.

I knew those docks
When at the hour of noon
A molten clangor shivered cheerful air
And thousand ship-bells rang—
And now—only a drifting buoy-bell rung
The knell of hope with its emphatic tongue,
Cut loose by the blockaders
To wander down the harbor in despair.

III

Close in the shadow of a warehouse lay
The blockade-runner with her smokestacks gray,
Back-raking like her masts, and up her hatches
Came voices, and the furnace-light in patches
Beat on the sails, and there alone was life—

Carolina Chansons

At the stevedores sang muffled snatches, and a strife
Just bales and barrels streamed down her yawning hold;
Cotton more valuable than money,
And barrels of the St. Louis sorghum and molasses,
Honey to lure the bees of English gold.

Three days she lay, this arrow-pointed boat,
With a light gold necklace, beaded at her throat,
Something there was about her like a stoat
That lies in wait to make a silent rush,
And there was something in her like a thrush,
For she had paddle-wheels, each like a wing.
She had a long hornet stern that seemed to hold a sting.

Sometimes her paddles slowly turned,
For they kept steam up, waiting for a gale.
It seemed as if the slim boat chafed and yearned
To go hell-tearing under steam and sail.
The oily water churned
And made a *slap-slap* to the paddles' stroke;
And a high painted canvas screen cut off
The blue haze of the lightwood smoke.

On the third evening, just at sunset, came
A scud of driving cloud; the lightning's flame;
The sun glared from a vicious, misty socket,
And in the moaning twilight curved a rocket
While a blue flame blurred and frayed

The Blockade Runner

At Castle Pinckney; thus we knew the storm
Had shifted the blockade.

IV

Out from the docks we shot
Into the screaming night;
We steered by lightning's light;
The paddles beat a mad tattoo;
The gridded walking-beam
Pumped up, pumped down,
Against the misty gleam;
Faster and faster jets the stand-pipes' steam.
And the white water whirls
Astern in phosphorescent whorls—
It swirls
And then leads backward green with light
Of streaming foam across the velvet night.

By the last lightning flare,
That must be Sumter, bare
Against a torn cloud like a rag;
But now the wind begins to flag,
And as it fails the engines lag;
Then comes a low hail from the mast
"Avast"—
Again the engines slow—
Then stop—
And we were drifting like a log

Carolina Chansons

As silent as a drowned corpse
In the sea-set tide,
Muffled in dripping fog.

No word from all the ship—
She seemed asleep—
Only the cluck of water and the feel
Of grim Atlantic rollers at the keel,
Nuzzling two fathoms deep;
They made her heel.
The porpoise played about our copper lip.
It seemed as if they were
The only living things in all that blur,
And we—
The only ship upon an ancient sea.

When suddenly a laugh broke through the spell;
It was so near
Our pulses lapsed a heart-beat,
Struck with fear.
The curtains of the fog were blown apart;
Stark in the sallow moonlight's metal day,
The white decks of a Yankee frigate lay.
I saw the glint of moonlight on her bell;
She was not twenty fathoms length away.
A man's face leaped out in the cherry glow
Of match flame in the hands he cupped
About the pipe whose curling wreaths he supped.

The Blockade Runner

“Clang! ” like a fireman’s gong
Our engine signals rang;
The paddles thrashed into a frothy song;
Five ship’s lengths we had forged along
Before their bugles sang.

We had ten long lengths on them
Before their ship began to swerve.
The rabid screw was frothing at her stern;
But I could feel the verve
Of our blithe timbers tremble; every nerve
Of our good race-horse ship
For open water seemed to yearn.

That was a Titan’s race;
The answering rockets snaked it down the coast,
Dying like scarlet worms
Among the fog-wreaths; but we gained,
And when her flaming cannon stabbed the mist
They thundered at our ghost.

So we were gone,
With cotton in our furnace,
Once the aft-stacks flared,
And then we plied pitch-pine
Dampened with turpentine,
Until the black sea glared—
But we had gone—

Carolina Chansons

Over the world's round shoulder
Thrust the dawn,
Their ugly, black masts dipping it hull down.
Three days the paddles beat while we drove on!

And I had won;
For on the fourth day as I sat
In the black coffin-shadow of a boat,
The burning decks a-wash with lime-white sun,
I saw the graybeard lookout swell his throat
And utter forth a glad and bronze hurrah,
“*Land Ho!*” he cried—
We lined the windward side
To cheer the washing palm tops of Nassau.

H. A.

BEYOND DEBATE

OUT from the wrought-iron gate
Miss Perdee drives in state;
Miss Perdee wears the thin smile
And the sleeves of 1888.

Miss Perdee's face is stifled as a sonnet;
Upon her wire-tight hair a duck-shaped bonnet
Nests, nodding with a *cachepeigne*
Of violets on it.

East Bay, some tea and talk, them home by King.
The horses have an antiquated plod;
The team is old, but not too old to balk
If driven north of Broad.

Miss Perdee wears the sure air of a queen,
Which only queens and Perdees can achieve.
The Perdees had blue blood in Adam's veins
When Adam had the rib he gave to Eve.

Back through the wrought-iron gate
Miss Perdee drives in state.
Miss Perdee lives down on the Battery!
Beyond debate.

H. A.

MARSH TACKIES *

BROWSING on the salty marsh grass,
Barrel-ribbed and blowsy-bellied,
With a neigh as shrill as whistles
And their mouths red-row from thistles,
I have seen the brown *marsh tackies*,
Hiding in the swamps at Kiawah,
With the gray mosquito patches
Gory on their shaggy thatches.
Balky, vicious, and degenerates,
They are small as Spanish jennets,
But their sires were with El Tarab,
When he conquered Andalusia
For the Prophet and the Arab;
And they came with Ponce de Leon,
When the Spaniard made a *peon*
And a Christian of the Carib.
Peering from palmetto thickets
At some fort's coquina wickets,
Startled Indians saw them grazing,
Thunder-stamping and amazing
As the beasts from other stars,
When they galloped down savannas,
And their masters seemed centaurs
With the new white metal blazing.

* See the note at the back of the book.

Marsh Tackies

Thus they came, these little beasts,
With the men-at-arms and priests,
In the west with Coronado
When he reached the Colorado,
In the east with bold De Soto
In the search for El Dorado,
And they packed the bells and toys
That the chieftains loved like boys;
Struggling through the swamps and briars
After dons and tonsured friars;
Dying in the forests dismal,
Till the shrill of silver clarion
Brought the buzzards to the carrion
Round the smoke of lonely fires
In a continent abysmal.

So De Soto left them dying,
Heedless of their human crying;
Here he turned them loose to die
Underneath a foreign sky;
But they lived on thicket dross,
On the leaves and Spanish moss—
And I wonder, and I wonder,
When I hear the startled thunder
Of their hoofs die down the reaches
Of these Carolina beaches.

H. A.

BACK RIVER

“MEDWAY PLANTATION”

BACK RIVER! What a name
For yesterdays come back again today,
Reborn to be tomorrows still the same—
A landgrave built it when the English came;
Then men made houses well
With cunning hands.
And service wore a nearer, feudal guise—
Witness the stone where “Rose,
A faithful servant,” lies.

Parnassus stretches east, beyond that
The plantation once called *Ararat*;
But they have gone,
Forgotten as an ancient drinking song;
And the old houses, dull and roofless,
Gape, with their doorways
Like a dumb mouth toothless,
With snake-engendering rooms that wall in fear,
Silent, down forest roadways loved by deer.

Sometimes at nights
These skeletons of houses flash with lights,

Back River

And shadow-horsemen ride,
Chasing wraith-deer
With eery cry of hounds
And shuddering cheer;
While the moon makes her rounds,
Glimmering through windows dead
As the dead eyes in a dead man's head;
And there is heard a misty horn—
Down in the woods,
Among the moss-draped solitudes,
The voodoo rooster crows,
While owls hoot on forlorn.

But *Back River* wears a different face;
It has not changed;—
Time seems to love the place;
Though all about it he has ranged,
Here he has not
Touched with his wand of rot—
Something of its immortal live-oak sap suffuses
Its sturdy men and houses and transfuses
Change into state.
The sunny hours wait at strange behest.
Here restless Time himself has come to rest.

The golden ivory of primeval light
Dwells in its Spanish moss,
Falling in living cascades from the trees,

Carolina Chansons

And who goes there in summer hears the bees
Booming among the Pride of India trees,
Dull grumbling tones,
A deaf man dreams,
Like far-off rumbling sound of boulder-stones
Washed down by headlong streams.
This is Time's temple;
Here he sleepy lies,
Watching the buzzards circle in the skies,
While shrubs slough off the pod,
Making a carpet delicate
Of petals strewn upon the sod,
Fit for the silver slippers of the moon
Upon the streets of Nod.

I saw him once asleep
Down by the dark ponds
Where alligators creep.
He had been fishing with a willow withe,
And by him lay his hourglass and scythe,
Resting upon the grass;
They lay there in the sun,
And through the glass the sands had ceased to run.
H. A.

DUSK

THEY tell me she is beautiful, my City,
That she is colorful and quaint, alone
Among the cities. But I, I who have known
Her tenderness, her courage, and her pity,
Have felt her forces mould me, mind and bone,
Life after life, up from her first beginning.
How can I think of her in wood and stone!
To others she has given of her beauty,
Her gardens, and her dim, old, faded ways,
Her laughter, and her happy, drifting hours,
Glad, spendthrift April, squandering her flowers,
The sharp, still wonder of her Autumn days;
Her chimes that shimmer from St. Michael's steeple
Across the deep maturity of June,
Like sunlight slanting over open water
Under a high, blue, listless afternoon.
But when the dusk is deep upon the harbor,
She finds *me* where her rivers meet and speak,
And while the constellations ride the silence
High overhead, her cheek is on *my* cheek.
I know her in the thrill behind the dark
When sleep brims all her silent thoroughfares.
She is the glamor in the quiet park

Carolina Chansons

That kindles simple things like grass and trees.
Wistful and wanton as her sea-born airs,
Bringer of dim, rich, age-old memories.
Out on the gloom-deep water, when the nights
Are choked with fog, and perilous, and blind,
She is the faith that tends the calling lights.
Hers is the stifled voice of harbor bells
Muffled and broken by the mist and wind.
Hers are the eyes through which I look on life
And find it brave and splendid. And the stir
Of hidden music shaping all my songs,
And these my songs, my all, belong to her.

D. H.

NOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

NOTES

NOTE ON THE CHIMES

TO ACCOMPANY "SILENCES"

The bells of Charleston, like the bells of London Town, have a peculiar interest. St. Michael's bells and clock were brought from England in 1764. When the British evacuated Charleston in 1782 they took the bells with them. A Mr. Ryhineu bought them in England and returned them. They were rehung in November, 1783. During the Civil War, St. Michael's steeple was the target for Federal artillery and fleet guns. In 1861 the bells were taken to Columbia, S. C., where two of them were stolen, and the rest injured by fire when the city was burned. Those left were again sent to England, and recast in the original moulds. In March, 1867, they once again rang out from the spire.

St. Phillip's Church stands in the old part of the town. During the Civil War its bells were cast into cannon. For a long time its steeple was used as a lighthouse. It is the center of forgotten things.

The bells of St. Matthew's are modern and speak of

Carolina Chansons

a new order, but all the bells are the voice of the town. They speak for her silences, which are eloquent.

NOTE ON "THE PIRATES"

The many inlets and sheltering coves of the Carolina coasts very early made the "low country " seaboard a rendezvous for pirates and a shelter to refit, and to bury their treasure.

As early as 1565 the French from Ribault's settlement succumbed to the temptation to plunder their rich Spanish neighbors; and in the century before the coming of the English, the lonely bays and estuaries saw strange ships from time to time. There was a pirate settlement by 1664 at Cape Fear River, where Governor Sayle did not arrive until 1670 to take formal possession for the Lords Proprietors of the colony.

The Peace of Utrecht turned many privateers into pirates, ships which had been habitually preying upon Spanish commerce since Blake's victory at Santa Cruz in 1657, and these gentlemen of fortune were at first welcome in the Carolinas. Nearly all the coin in circulation then was at first brought by such doubtful adventurers, and they were regarded as the natural protectors of the Carolinas against their powerful enemy, the Spaniard, to the south.

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Gradually, however, this cordial attitude changed. It was a small step from attacking Spanish to plundering English commerce, and with the cultivation and export of rice and indigo, the demand for a safe sea passage grew overwhelming, while the coasts continued to be ravaged. The royal government was slow to act. In 1684 we learn that "the governor will not in all probability always reside in Charles Town, which is so near the sea as to be in danger of sudden attack by pirates;" nor was this an idle thought, for the town was blockaded by pirate ships at the harbor's mouth, and medicines and supplies demanded while citizens were held as hostages.

In 1718 Governor Spotswood of Virginia sent an expedition to North Carolina, which succeeded in surprising, capturing, and beheading the notorious "Black Beard," who in company with one Stede Bonnet, had long ravaged the coast with impunity.

In August of the same year word was brought to Charlestown that Bonnet with his ship the *Royal James* was refitting in the Cape Fear River. Colonel William Rhett volunteered to attack him. With two sloops of eight guns each, the *Henry* and the *Nymph*, and about 130 men in all, he set sail, and found Bonnet at anchor in the Cape Fear River. In making the attack, and during the encounter, all three ships ran aground. The fight raged desperately all day between the *Henry* and the *Royal James*,

Carolina Chansons

the *Nymph* being unable to get off the shoal and come to the help of her companion ship. Bonnet finally surrendered and was taken prisoner to Charlestown. It is this adventure which the poem celebrates.

Bonnet escaped, but was afterwards recaptured by Colonel Rhett on Sullivan's Island. He and about thirty of his crew were hanged about the corner of Meeting and Water Streets. Bonnet, himself, was hanged later than his crew, after a masterpiece of invective by the judge, who painted hell vividly. This pirate leader was dragged fainting to the gallows, and there was much sympathy for him, as it was said, "His humor of going a-pirating proceeded from a disorder of the mind . . . occasioned by some discomforts he found in the married state."

NOTE ON "THE SEEWEEES OF SEEWEE BAY"

The Seewee Indians, who lived on the shores of what is now known as Bull's Bay, S. C., but was formerly called Seewee Bay, became discontented with the small prices obtained from the white traders for pelts. Seeing the ships constantly coming into the Bay from England, they conceived the idea of building large canoes and reaching England over the ocean. Several huge canoes, larger than any hereto-

Notes

fore built by Indians, were accordingly constructed; these were loaded with the proceeds of a season's hunting, and, manned by all the braves of the tribe, set out in the direction from which the ships came. A gale came up and the braves were never seen again. Their squaws gradually wandered off to other tribes. This event took place about 1696.

NOTE ON LA FAYETTE

TO ACCOMPANY "LA FAYETTE LANDS"

The Marquis de la Fayette, under the name of Gilbert du Motier, sailed from Bordeaux on the 26th of March, 1777, accompanied by the Baron Kalb and several French Army Officers. On the 14th of June, 1777, he first landed in America on North Island in Winyah Bay, near Georgetown, S. C., and was received at the house of Major Huger. In a letter to his wife, written soon after his landing, La Fayette says, "I first saw and judged of the life of the country at the house of a Major Huger." Detailed accounts of La Fayette's landing and reception still exist.

Carolina Chansons

NOTE ON THEODOSIA BURR

TO ACCOMPANY "THE PRIEST AND THE PIRATE"

In 1801 Theodosia, daughter of Aaron Burr, Vice-President of the United States, married Joseph Alston of "The Oaks," Hobcaw Barony, S. C. They had one son, Aaron Burr Alston, who died in 1812, the same year that Joseph Alston was elected Governor of the State. On December 30th, 1812, at the urgent solicitation of her father, who had just returned from Europe, and who awaited her eagerly in New York, Theodosia set sail from Georgetown, S. C., in the pilot-boat schooner, "Patriot." Those on board were never seen again.

The vessel, which was being fitted out as a privateer, was carrying dismantled guns under her deck, and may have foundered in the severe gale of January 1st, 1813.

In 1869, however, a Dr. W. C. Pool attended a fisher family at Naggs Head, Kittyhawk, N. C. In the fisherman's hut hung an oil painting of a beautiful woman, which had been taken from an abandoned pilot-built schooner that drifted onto the North Carolina coast in that vicinity in January, 1813. No one was aboard and the vessel had evidently been looted. Ladies' clothes were found in great disorder in the cabin.

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There was also a story told by a dying sailor who confessed that he had seen the crew of such a boat walk the plank, and that among them was a beautiful woman who walked into the sea with a Bible or prayer-book in her hand.

The painting is in the possession of the Burr-Alston connection, and is thought by them, on account of its striking family resemblance, to be a picture of Theodosia Burr. The painting story has often been scouted, but there is too much circumstantial evidence to ignore it in treating the legend.

NOTE TO "THE LAST CREW"

The "Fish-Boat" of the Confederate Navy, which exhaustive research indicates to have been the first submarine vessel to sink an enemy ship in time of war, was designed by Horace L. Hundley in 1863. This boat was twenty feet long, three and one-half feet wide, and five feet deep. Her motive power consisted of eight men whose duty it was to turn the crank of the propeller shaft by hand until the target had been reached. When this primitive craft was closed for diving there was only sufficient air to support life for half an hour. Since the torpedo was attached to the boat itself there was no chance of escape. The only hope was to reach and destroy the

Carolina Chansons

enemy vessel before the crew were suffocated or drowned.

Five successive volunteer crews died without reaching their objectives. But the sixth crew was successful in sinking the Federal blockading ship "Housatonic," their own craft being caught and crushed beneath the foundering vessel. These crews went to certain death in the night time, in such secrecy that it was often months before their own families knew the names of the men. And now, with the lapse of scarcely more than half a century, it has been possible to find the names of only sixteen of those who paid the price.

Because no nation of any time can point to a more inspiring example of self-sacrifice, and because now, in a country reunited and indissoluble, the traditions of both the North and the South are a common, glorious heritage, the poem, which presents the final episode in the drama, is written as a memorial to all who gave their lives in the venture.

D. H.

NOTE ON POE

TO ACCOMPANY "EDGAR ALLAN POE" AND
"ALCHEMY"

In May, 1828, Poe enlisted in the army under the name of Edgar A. Perry, and was assigned to Battery

Notes

"H" of the First Artillery at Fort Independence. In October his battery was ordered to Fort Moultrie, Charleston, S. C. Poe spent a whole year on Sullivan's Island. Professor C. Alphonso Smith, the well-known Poe authority, says, "So far as I know, this was the only tropical background that Poe had ever seen." That the susceptible nature of the young poet was vastly impressed by the weirdness and melancholy scenery of the Carolina coast country, there can be very little doubt. The dank tarns and funereal woodlands of his landscapes, or at least the strong suggestion of them, may all be found here, and the scene of *The Goldbug* is definitely laid on Sullivan's Island. Here are dim family vaults, and tracts of country in which the House of Usher might well stand.

"Dim vales and shadowy floods
And cloudy-looking woods
Whose forms we can't discover,
From the tears that drip all over"

was written while Poe was in the army at Fort Moultrie, and appeared in his second volume in 1829. There are later echoes.

"Around by lifting winds forgot
Resignedly beneath the sky
The melancholy waters lie."

H. A.

“MARSH TACKIES”

“Marsh Tackies” is the name given by the negroes to the little, wild horses of the Carolina coast country’s swamps and sea islands. Early traditions say that these horses were found by the English when they first came and that they are the descendants of run-aways from the Spanish settlements to the South about St. Augustine, or horses turned loose by De-Soto upon his ill-fated march to the Mississippi. These horses pick up a precarious living in out-of-the-way sections along the coast, and are occasionally taken and broken in by the negroes. They are the “poor horse trash” of the section.

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